AN INTIMATE GLIMPSE INTO ALBANIA

000 with their dusky green leaves and snarled old roots and trunks, to the grey, white and sun-baked shades of the dreamy little town, and all this set like a tiny little drop on the vast, fertile plain.

132 Elbasan is well-known for its great variety of products, made possible by the rich soil of the plain. The town, sheltered by the immense old wall, enjoys a somewhat hot-house atmosphere, for which it should indeed be grateful, for it becomes terrifically cold during the winter months when the east winds sweep over it from the mountains of
133 Librazhd. These great monarchs, snow-crowned ten months of the year, which surround the plain are very cool even in August, making them delightful resorts from the heat of the plain.

241 This district is versatile in that it can produce, in this dual atmosphere, both the products of the north and the south. There is an abundance of cotton, rice and tobacco, as
245 well as maize, barley and wheat. And unlike many of its neighbors, it has its own figs, grapes, melons, oranges, lemons and olives growing on the plain, and apples, pears, raspberries and various other northern fruits mellowing into ripeness on the mountains surrounding Elbasan.

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3: Kedlich S-3 (no date) 1936 EG1 Albania Ed 1

Climate

• 132 ALBANIA lies in the north temperate zone. It is mid-way between the north pole and the equator. This position gives the climate its characteristics—moderate heat, sufficient moisture and a suitable distribution of atmospheric pressure throughout the year.

Albania has three climates: the Mediterranean, the continental and the temperate continental, due to the alignment of the mountain ranges which leaves the country open towards Central Europe and the Pannonian plain.

The Mediterranean climate exists only in the narrow strip of coastline between the mountains and the sea and to a height of 1,300 metres at most.

During the summer there are large patches of snow on the higher peaks, and, were the temperature a little different, these patches would become a ridge of snow-caps.

The winters are not too cold, often broken by warmer days. There is a moderate rain-

3: Reilich S-3 (no date) 1936 EG1 Albania E41

132 fall during this season. The summer days are very warm between eleven and five o'clock, at which hour the temperature drops to a delightful coolness which makes even the indoors very comfortable and a coat becomes necessary outdoors. The heat is not as intense as the thermometers would have us believe for the summer climate is very dry and not of the humid variety that makes one so uncomfortable in some climates.

The coastal cities are rapidly becoming fashionable summer resorts for foreigners on account of the mild, summer temperature.

The continental weather predominates in the central portion of Albania causing coolness to last throughout the summer. This climate is also general in the southern sections. Also in these sections the winters are damp with the heavy rains starting in November. While the coastal cities of Durrazzo (Durrës) and Valona (Vlona) have a milder winter of not lower than 8° or 9° Centigrade. There is little of the intense freezing that one finds in North America.

Here in Albania the artistic beauties are wedded to the beauties of nature and climate. This health-giving atmosphere makes a visit

132 to Albania, whether for rest or recreation, a most delightful one. In the summer, one is not troubled by climatic changes — the weather is consistent with its season. There are no sudden heat waves, cold waves or storms as are to be found in many climates. Nor does the temperature take quick leaps up and down.

This invigorating climate, combined with the natural beauty and historic lore of this enchanting country, causes this "Gem of the Adriatic Sea" to be the most ideal and delightful place to spend a vacation.

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

CHAPTER VIII.

ALBANIAN WOMEN: THEIR STATUS AND OCCUPATIONS.

121 As the character of a people is generally so much influenced by the nature of the country they inhabit, a brief description of the division of Turkey occupied by the Albanians may give greater interest to my
101 remarks on this race. Albania, as its native name of *Skiperi*, "The Land of Rocks," signifies, is one of the most mountainous divisions of Turkey. The principal
133 chain runs north and south, parallel with the Adriatic, and from it jut many spurs, composed of mountains as lofty as the main range, which ramify in every direction, so that almost the whole surface of the country is covered with rugged hills and deep valleys, save near the mouth of the river Ergenth. Even the coast is grandly mountainous, the spurs there often terminating in abrupt precipices, the sides of which are eternally beaten by the lashing waves.

●132 Almost every variety of climate is found within the limits of Albania. In the south, and near the coast, the temperature is as mild as at Naples, and oranges, citrons, grapes, pomegranates, figs, and other fruits grow in abundance. But the cold increases with the distance from the sea, and only twenty miles from the Adriatic the snowfalls are heavy, and
[137] the frosts severe. The higher and more northern

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

tained their independence for six centuries within 184
the Turkish Empire look with distrust and con- 578
tempt on the Toshks whose valleys have been flooded by every wave of invaders. The Toshks, who are the educated men of Albania, and the travelers, are equally contemptuous of the Ghegs, ignorant men unable to read or write. Nor do the Toshks admit that they cannot fight as well as the Ghegs. It was the Toshks in Sicily who fought with Garibaldi, the Toshks of Egypt who fought with Mehmet Ali; the Albanian soldiers in Russia and Rumania and Turkey are Toshk; the 50,000 Albanians in the United States are Toshk, and fought well with the Americans in France. Hundreds of them have returned to spread American ideas through the south; there are Toshk villages in which American English is spoken by nearly every child. Men from these villagers led the forces that drove the Italians from Valona in 1920. Indeed, say the Toshks, they can fight as well as Ghegs. But it is not fighting that Albania needs.

One of the errors about Albania, to which I 133
fear my descriptions may contribute is the belief that the country is entirely mountainous. This is true of the northern part, adjoining Montenegro. Farther south the ranges are like the partitions in a house; steep, high, almost impassable, they surround valleys and plateaus of rich level land, much of it irrigated. The 132
climate of the valleys is semitropical; rice, cot- 241
ton, tobacco, citrus fruits, figs, and pomegranates

133 drains Mirdita, except for the *bairak* of Spaç,
101 the northwestern finger of which forms part of the Drin system. With this same exception, the watershed between the Drin and the 2 Fans is the boundary between Puka and Mirdita. The continuation of the watershed between Mati and Dibra again separates, farther north, Mirdita from Luma. Mati and Mirdita, and Dibra and Luma east of the Black Drin, are parted by deep valleys, running laterally, cut on opposite sides of the river.

133 These rivers serve more often as tribal boundaries than as routes of travel. Their banks are so steep that the roads usually follow the crests and shoulders of the mountains, only dipping down into the valleys where it is necessary to cross them. Their waters are so swift that only in rare spots can they be navigated. All in all, they are barriers to travel and communication.

●132 It is a rule long known to geographers that in the Mediterranean basin, lands lying on the western slopes of peripheral land masses receive more rain than those on the east.[2] The higher the mountains flanking the coast, the more the rain. Ghegnia and Montenegro have the heaviest rainfall of any Mediterranean countries. The Adriatic coast, from Lesh up to Dubrovnik, receives well over 60 inches of rain a year; and all of Ghegnia, back from the coast, gets between 60 and 40 inches, with the total decreasing to the east.

This is not all winter rain. It may rain any month of the year, and the summer rainfall totals anywhere from 4 to 8 inches, enough to permit the cultivation of maize by dry farming. This fact alone takes the Gheg highlands out of the Mediterranean climate area. The winter rain, which begins to fall in September, becomes snow at the higher altitudes. Only in the highest valleys and on the peaks does it last out the winter. Elsewhere a succession of snowfalls and thaws renders this region as unpleasant as New England in early spring.

The temperature again prohibits the growth of many Mediterranean crops, such as the fig and olive, which soon disappear as one leaves the coast. All of the uplands receive severe winter frosts, and on the border of the Kossovo plain the climate becomes continental.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

There is rough winter grazing among the shrubs especially for
goats and cattle, and some agriculture in clearings, but the zone derives its chief riches from the many acres of fertile alluvial soil that adjoin the rivers.

Oaks, tall or dwarf, begin sporadically among the shrubs and continue as thick forests up to a height of 2900 feet near Shkodër and 3300 feet in warmer districts. Among them grow ash, aspen, chestnut, cornel, elm, hawthorn, hazel, hornbeam and limes. The majority of the 1140 villages in north Albania are found in this zone, for it best provides for Albanian needs. Though the soil is dry on the whole, it contains a sufficiency of springs. On the plateaux and gentler slopes there is enough arable land for subsistence farming, all that is possible among these rugged mountains. The copses and woods furnish winter grazing for small flocks and herds; an adjoining mountain furnishes the requisite summer feed. The copses and woods also provide fuel for the log-fires that in Albanian phraseology are 'the poor man's wealth'. Leaves lopped from the oak trees in autumn supply winter fodder which livestock eat with almost as much relish as they do hay, a scarcer commodity. It is this supplement to the grazing in the copses and woods which makes mixed farming possible in this zone; without it many animals could not get through the winter, and their number would have to be reduced. If it is sometimes hot in the forest in summer, the heat is never unbearable, and in winter the cold is never excessive. In general the zone is healthy. A little wheat is grown, but—as everywhere in Albania, the Myzeqe plain excepted—the staple crop is maize. The grain provides food, and the livestock luxuries and government dues as well.

In the next zone beeches grow singly, in small clumps, or in mighty forests such as those between Çermenikë and Martanesh where one may walk for seven hours in the daytime and never catch a glimpse of the sun. Still without roads to carry modern woodcutters and their tools to them, such forests are in the virgin state, the trees self-sown, the strong killing the weak, and the survivors growing bigger and bigger until they succumb in extreme old age to some winter blast, when they lie and rot where they fall. When communications are developed, this waste will stop and these forests become a very valuable asset. No grass grows in them or under isolated beeches, of course, but there are usually grass meadows in the clearings, some of which are enormous. Well watered from the same sources as the beeches and fat with humus

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EG1 Albania EG1

number is limited only by the amount of winter grazing available, which small owners find, and have always found, in the oak zone. In Turkish times, when Albania and Macedonia were both Turkish provinces and had no customs barriers between them as they have now, large owners sought it on the roomy plain of Salonica. Since Albanian emancipation in 1912 they have been confined to the more meagre pastures on the seaward side of the coastal plain at home, a restriction which has entailed a considerable cutting down of their flocks and herds. Nevertheless, in 1936–7 taxes were paid on 1,424,965 sheep, 773,969 goats, 144,763 cattle and 44,318 horses in the whole of Albania;[1] there are no separate figures for its northern half. Many more animals ran about the houses, unregistered and free of tax. For Albanians the importance of sheep lies, it should be noted, not only in their wool and meat as in England, but in their milk and the butter and cheese made from it.

If only the coastal plain were more spacious, it would be a perfect complement to the mountains for pastoralism on the grand scale. In the portion south of Lesh the rivers Drin, Mat and Ishm, entering the sea at points less than 6 miles apart, have created what is virtually one vast delta of mud and swamp, lush undergrowth, and trees that have come too quickly to maturity. Farther south, swamps of the same type cover much of the Plain of Durrës, and a great lagoon extends to the very outskirts of the town. Two more lagoons and a series of swamps mark the estuaries of the rivers Shkumbî and Seman on the coast of Myzeqe. More marshes and the lagoon of Kakarriq outline the course of the River Buenë in the north.

On the coast the average yearly rainfall is 39–47 inches, against 57 at Shkodër, 67 at Krujë and 72 at Pukë, an inland place 39 miles east of Shkodër. Albania is one of the wettest countries in Europe because so many of its ranges run from north to south and are high enough to intercept the rain-laden clouds that drift in from the west. The first rains fall in October when it is still hot on the coastal plain. The moisture and the heat combine to produce a luxuriant crop of new grass by the time that the sheep come down from the mountains.

This grass is found, not only in the hay meadows and swamps, but also, owing to the violence of the winter rains, on all the arable land

[1] Gashi, *Shqipnija*, p. 117.

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

land. A high proportion of the year's rainfall falls in November and March:[1]

NOVEMBER	MARCH
Durrës 215 mm. (8·46 in.)	100 mm. (3·94 in.)
Shkodër 209 mm. (8·23 in.)	162 mm. (6·38 in.)
Krujë 337 mm. (13·27 in.)	157 mm. (6·18 in.)
Pukë 260 mm. (10·24 in.)	202 mm. (7·95 in.)

When a storm breaks over the mountains, every river and rivulet in the storm-swept area rises rapidly because the surface soil is seldom deep enough to retain much of the falling rain. In furious spate the rivers rush steeply towards the sea and, as they near the coast, spread far beyond their banks, engulfing many acres of arable land, and enlarging the marshes and lagoons so that they engulf many more. Because of this flooding, wheat cannot be sown near the coast. If sown in autumn, the November floods would wash it away, and after the March floods the ground does not dry in time for a spring sowing. Maize is, consequently, the only crop that can be raised. While awaiting its planting in late May, the fields lie fallow and grass-grown. The March floods are also responsible for the striking size and number of the hay meadows; much land never dries enough to grow even maize and must be left permanently under grass.

Climatically, too, the coastal plain dovetails into the high pastures. Whereas the mountains are deep in snow all winter, the temperature at the coast never falls quite to freezing-point. In January, the coldest month, the average recorded for Durrës and Valona (Vlonë) is respectively 47 and 48 degrees, with 40 and 41½ degrees at inland Shkodër and Tirana (Tiranë). Rain falls frequently and heavily, but unless a sudden rise in a river catches sheep unawares and sweeps them out to sea, neither animals nor shepherds come to much harm. By the end of May, when the rains cease, everything changes, and life near the swamps becomes intolerable for man and beast. Day temperatures rise swiftly towards their summer maximum of 86 degrees and the nights are hot, so that every movement is a burden. The dense vegetation of the swamps exudes odours as foetid as those in a tropical forest. Swarms of malaria-carrying mosquitoes emerge from the stagnant pools to attack man; swarms of gadflies, more savage than any

[1] Gashi, *Shqipnija*, p. 49.

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

annually. In Godolesh the two neighbours did it in alternate years, having exclusive right to the earth with its valuable fertilizing properties for the year when they did the clean up. In Lumë two neighbours cleared the drain together year after year and flung half the earth on one side and half on the other.

In other places one ditch seldom drained two neighbouring fields on the principle that 'you can't walk on my path or use my drain'. In Gurrëzë the man who wanted a drain had to cut it on his own ground with a 'footprint' (20 cm.) of land between the boundary and its edge for the protection of his neighbour's land. Without this buttress the drain might overflow or burst its bank to the detriment of his neighbour. In either contingency its owner had to pay compensation to his neighbour, but prevention of damage was always better for both parties. His neighbour might also accuse him of encroaching on his land, an insulting remark that provoked instant retaliation. If, later on, the neighbour wanted a drain he had to make one for himself, also a 'footprint' away from the boundary. In Lumë and Elbasan there was little risk that open drains would flood, but there too a space had to be left between their edge and the boundary. The avowed purpose of this space was to support the boundary stones. In all cases of single ownership the owner, on clearing the ditch, threw the earth on his own side, where it testified to his ownership if this was ever questioned.

Sometimes a man of Shkrel wanted both a drain and a fence. In that event the ditch was cut along the boundary and a strip of ground of the same width was set aside on the other side of the boundary. All the earth excavated from the ditch was thrown on this strip and so the neighbours became quits, one had a 'hole' on his land and the other a 'hill'. The fence was erected on the 'hill'.

We come now to one of the most important considerations in boundary making. North Albania is one of the wettest regions in Europe, and when the land was waterlogged it inevitably tended to slip downhill. The tropical intensity of many rainstorms increased the mischief. Terracing the fields would have helped to check it, but such manual labour is contrary to the habits and dignity of the north Albanian. His law, however, gave him every possible protection. When there were two fields on a slope, one above the other, they might be separated by a field-path, a road, an irrigation channel or a fence. (The term 'field-path' includes the